

DOE

Comments

THR-0016/001

My perception is that damn near every bit of agency money comes from taxpayers. Not from industry. And my perception is that for the most part, agencies now tend to run interference for industry. In the past we have paid industry by way of taxpayers' money and they have made huge profits at the Hanford Site. Now we are paying some of the very same corporations money to clean up this site, or other associated organizations, private corporations. And it strikes me that agency people need to get it really into their heads that we, the taxpayers, should be the bosses, not the corporate people.

TPO-0014/001

And so I just wonder, with the debt that we've got built up in this country, where are the resources going to come from to clean up anything?

Response

DOE's funding is provided by Congress, and from year-to-year has remained fairly constant. There are a number of cleanup activities ongoing at Hanford or being contemplated. Many of these cleanup activities require environmental review under applicable laws (e.g., NEPA, RCRA, CERCLA) and hence the need for public input. Public input often shapes the design and implementation of cleanup at Hanford. In addition, DOE is continually trying to make the most effective use of its cleanup dollars by developing (with input and guidance from its regulatory partners and public interest groups and individuals) new cleanup methods and approaches.

Comments

L-0055/010

Under the current plan Hanford will send its high-level waste (HLW) and spent nuclear fuel (SNF) to a national geologic repository at Yucca Mountain. What if this repository is filled with commercial and waste from other producers? Does Hanford have contingency plans on where this waste will be deposited? There is not a definite time on when this waste could or would be shipped to Yucca Mountain.

Response

DOE is responsible for the cleanup of dozens of sites around the country. DOE's approach is to consolidate and dispose of radioactive waste from all its cleanup efforts in the safest and most cost-effective manner possible. Hanford and other sites would be available for the disposal of low-level waste and mixed low-level waste; WIPP is used for the disposal of TRU waste; Yucca Mountain is expected to be used for the disposal of high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel.

Comments

TPO-0002/003

But if you think about what they're trying to do and why they're so interested in doing one thing, as you said, sir, bringing more waste in, is because they have a directive that's out of headquarters that says they have to close 40 percent of the complex by 2006.

Response

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) cleanup efforts involve many sites nationwide. Part of those efforts include consolidating waste disposal in the interests of human and environmental safety, security, and reduced costs. DOE believes that Hanford, as an arid site, is an appropriate location for disposal of LLW and MLLW that is protective of human health and the environment.

The HSW EIS discusses the relationship of Hanford's waste management activities to those across the DOE complex in Volume I Section 1.3 and Volume II Appendix N.

DOE

Comments

L-0054/006

In addition, these studies [US Centers for Disease Control and EPA as discussed in the previous comment] indicate the need to remove chemically hazardous components subject to RCRA, such as MLLW, given the proximity of the 200 Area to the Columbia River, which is a drinking water source for several million people in the Northwest.

Response

MLLW will be treated to meet applicable RCRA and State standards prior to disposal.

Groundwater contamination beneath the Hanford Site is being studied and remediated by the ongoing CERCLA program in accordance with the Tri-Party Agreement. The CERCLA process considers legally applicable Federal, State, and local laws or relevant and appropriate requirements (ARARs). Any decisions reached by DOE on the basis of analysis in the HSW EIS would be implemented in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. See Volume II Appendix N, Section N.2.4.

Comments

P-0135/001

I lived in Richland, WA for 2 years, taught kids in a local school - I was shocked and dismayed at the number of ill, seriously affected unhealthy children and adults living there, well-educated intelligent, sick people. Please stop this waste dump!

Response

The DOE takes very seriously its responsibility to protect and preserve public health and the environment.

Comments

TSE-0024/005

And in regard to this groundwater contamination, I think [of] the word commitment. I think that I personally believe that this groundwater is more valuable than the plutonium that the DOE can produce, and also the salmon in the river, is also more valuable than all of the plutonium that you have.

Response

The DOE takes very seriously its responsibility to protect and preserve public health and the environment.

Groundwater contamination beneath the Hanford Site is being studied and remediated by the ongoing CERCLA program in accordance with the Tri-Party Agreement. The CERCLA process considers legally applicable Federal, State, and local laws or relevant and appropriate requirements (ARARs). Any decisions reached by DOE on the basis of analysis in the HSW EIS would be implemented in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. See Volume II Appendix N, Section N.2.4.

Some additional wastes will be generated as part of the cleanup of Hanford Site and other DOE sites. However, plutonium production, the source of most of the waste created, has stopped at Hanford. TRU waste, high-level waste, and spent nuclear fuel will be sent to underground repositories in other states that have been designed to safely contain the waste.

The HSW EIS evaluates impacts to the Columbia River and downstream populations for about 10,000 years. For all alternatives analyzed in this HSW EIS, DOE has analyzed the long-term movement of contaminants through soil and groundwater to the Columbia River. In all cases, it found that the water quality of the Columbia River would be virtually indistinguishable from the current river background levels. The

DOE

concentrations of all the constituent contaminants were well below benchmark drinking water standards at a hypothetical well located near the Columbia River. The impacts of groundwater reaching the river are discussed in Volume I Sections 5.3 and Volume II Appendix G. See also Volume I Section 5.11 and 5.14 and Volume II Appendixes F and L.

Comments

TPO-0014/005

I think that's [the prevention of a serious, horrible permanent disaster and the destruction of a water system and the ecosystem] as obvious to anyone here as it is to the DOE, because they have all the facts and they know these things too.

TPO-0020/002

I mean, we'll see down the line, in another 10, 20 years they'll maybe dig them [waste] back up and we'll have to do something else.

TPO-0023/001

Are these people aware that in 1948 DOE deliberately started releasing stuff on the people? They released double the amount that Chernobyl released, you know. And this is a large area. I happened to be working over there in '57. I got -- well, anyway, that whole area is contaminated. And beta radiation is just as deadly as gamma or alpha. So, I mean, this stuff doesn't go away. It's in our food chain, it's everything. That's why we got double the cancer rate than we did a few years ago is because of it.

Response

The DOE takes very seriously its responsibility to protect and preserve public health and the environment.

DOE is committed to cleaning up the Hanford Site in accordance with the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) and applicable environmental requirements under federal and state laws and regulations. As of February 1, 2003, DOE had met 99% of its TPA milestones on or ahead of schedule. A lot in the way of cleanup has happened at Hanford over the last decade. Portions of the site have already been cleaned up, removed from the National Priority List (NPL), and released for other uses (e.g., the 1100 Operable Unit). As part of the river corridor cleanup, DOE is remediating contaminated soil sites, decommissioning the plutonium production reactors and associated facilities, removing production reactor fuel from the K Basins to interim storage in the 200 Area, and treating groundwater contaminated by past operations. Groundwater contamination beneath the Hanford Site is being studied and remediated by the ongoing CERCLA program in accordance with the Tri-Party Agreement. See Volume II Appendix N, Section N.2.4. See Volume III Section 2.0, Item 6 of the CRD for more examples of cleanup at Hanford.

DOE is responsible for the cleanup of dozens of sites around the country. DOE's approach is to consolidate and dispose of radioactive waste from all its cleanup efforts in the safest and most cost-effective manner possible. Hanford and other sites would be available for the disposal of low-level waste and mixed low-level waste; WIPP is used for the disposal of TRU waste; Yucca Mountain is expected to be used for the disposal of high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel. Many more curies of waste will be sent offsite from Hanford than will be received from offsite. Analysis indicates that these wastes could be handled without complicating future remediations, or diverting resources or disposal capacity from other Hanford cleanup activities.

The Hanford clean-up effort is expected to be completed in 2035, followed by a long-term stewardship program that ensures waste remaining onsite is appropriately managed.

DOE

Comments

L-0014/001, L-0022/001

The primary issue to be addressed in this EIS is "will all wastes at Hanford be managed properly and safely?" The current draft of the EIS does not provide convincing evidence in response to this question.

L-0014/004, L-0022/004

DOE must adopt and follow policies to treat and dispose of all wastes in accordance with regulatory requirements. Unlined trenches must not be utilized for the future disposal of any wastes.

Response

The DOE takes very seriously its responsibility to protect and preserve public health and the environment.

Federal RCRA Subtitle C and related state hazardous waste management regulations require that radioactive mixed waste land disposal units meet minimum technical standards to prevent the release of hazardous substances. The standards include a system of multiple liners to prevent leakage into groundwater, a leachate collection system, groundwater monitoring wells, a multi-layer cap to prevent infiltration of rain and snow, stringent waste treatment standards, and a program of monitoring, inspection, and reporting during the period of operation and after closure. These standards will apply to all new mixed waste disposal units evaluated in the HSW EIS. Volume I Section 2.2.3 discusses disposal facilities and their environmental protection features.

The preferred alternative as described in Volume I Section 3.7 is to dispose of low level waste in newly constructed lined disposal facilities as soon as they are available. For purposes of analysis the HSW EIS assumes this would occur by 2007. MLLW is currently being, and will continue to be, disposed of in lined facilities.

However, the use of unlined trenches for disposal of low level waste is an established, legal, and environmentally protective method of low level waste disposal at both DOE and commercial facilities. As such, it is a reasonable alternative, under CEQ regulations, and must be analyzed. The HSW EIS considers a wide range of alternatives for disposal of low level waste in both lined and unlined facilities. Lined trench alternatives include leak detection and leachate collection capabilities. In addition, groundwater monitoring would be done in compliance with applicable RCRA and State hazardous waste, TPA, and DOE requirements to validate the performance of the disposal facilities.

Volume I Section 6 identifies the major statutes, permits, compliance agreements, and regulatory requirements followed in conducting operations at Hanford Site. Statutes include AEA, CERCLA, RCRA and the State of Washington Hazardous Waste Management Act. Volume I Section 6.3 discusses the TPA. Volume I Section 6.4 discusses the Dangerous Waste Management permit. Volume I Section 6.19 provides a summary of existing and potential permits (including state approved permits where state decision-making will be necessary) required to construct and operate treatment, storage, and disposal facilities related to the HSW EIS alternatives. Volume I Section 6 has been updated and revised in response to comments in the final HSW EIS.

DOE

Comments

E-0009/002

Can the public safely assume government agencies will appropriately represent and protect their interests in long term health and the viability of Washington state?

I would like to think this is the case, but at this point I SERIOUSLY doubt the people's interests are being counted (even if they have a chance to be "heard"), especially when "inconvenient" to big business short-term profits, and energy industry elites that have apparently paid off our "democratically elected" administration and Congress.

E-0026/002

You [US DOE] have a responsibility that goes beyond your job description to ensure that Hanford is cleaned up.

E-0051/008

Pushing the preferred alternative of the HSW EIS will further erode the public trust and damage the environment.

F-0011/001

DOE IS NOT TO be trusted!!!

F-0012/005

DOE's credibility has been compromised - its time to re-earn it.

F-0017/002

You [Mr. Collins / US DOE] need to act like a responsible and caring human being, a moral human being and do your job with "Integrity!"

F-0018/002

One of the big problems between DOE and the public is lack of trust - one might think the need for haste is driven by politics - not science.

L-0004/001

Continued violation of the 15 year old Tri-Party Agreement, lack of funding, budget secrecy, allowing cleanup priorities to be determined by profits to contractors, rather than those committed to real cleanup: these are only a few of many indications that public trust is indeed being placed secondary to interests that are short-sighted, self-serving, and in the case of the enormous potential for environmental disaster, downright dangerous to public health and safety.

L-0034/007

Based on history, DOE has lost much credibility for meeting established deadlines, upholding legally binding agreements, and addressing serious public concerns.

P-0034/001

How can we trust the Dept. of Energy to properly clean up and protect Hanford in the future if it has not done so in the past?

P-0045/002

People assume they will fix problems as they emerge (which is fine in many fields) but so many problems have "emerged" at Hanford credibility is shot as carrying capacity is exceeded.

P-0098/001

Federal conduct re: nuclear waste has been unethical, irresponsible and criminal.

DOE

THR-0002/008

And so if they are already significantly deficient, [low level burial ground monitoring networks and programs] I wouldn't trust the Department of Energy to bring in more waste and promise to monitor this waste and keep the waste from entering the soil and groundwater.

THR-0007/001

There is a story about how the Oregon Trail went to California and Oregon, they said the people that could read went to the Northwest. And I hope we still can use that to convince the Department of Energy to use the most extreme care, the most extreme measures. I mean, sure, it's going to cost a lot of money.

TLG-0009/008

During the budget hearings, a DOE official said that one of the biggest problems his Department faced was credibility. But when the DOE acts as if this decision has already been made, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE proposes a plan that the Washington Department of Ecology believes will leave waste in the tanks, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE proposes a plan that renames tank waste so it can be pumped on to trucks, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE refuses to extend a routine request to extend the comment deadline, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE lets contracts that don't allow Ecology and the EPA to monitor progress on cleanup, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE reaches an agreement on transuranic waste shipments and breaks it within months, it's bound to have credibility problems. When the DOE takes actions that can be fairly interpreted as attempts to weaken or break the Tri-Party Agreement, it's bound to have credibility problems.

TPO-0002/001

... from the public perspective, what you have to think of, this [the EIS] is a shell game.

TPO-0008/006

We, the taxpayers, are concerned about accountability. Where does accountability stop in this process? We've got the EPA, the Department of Ecology in Washington State, and the Oregon Departments of Energy, and then there's the U.S. Congress. ... So where does the safety of the citizens living in the area, affected by Hanford, come to its rightful place in the chain of accountability?

TPO-0010/001

Should we trust a government agency that is so shortsighted? Why is this occurring now? Why wasn't a plan developed before the need to dispose of the waste?

TPO-0018/002

I think that I speak for a great many people here tonight when I say that we really can't trust the Department of Energy. And I'm not talking about you two, I'm talking about the guys in Washington, D.C., and the Bush administration.

TPO-0026/001

And it strikes me that we continue to have a crisis of trust here.

TSE-0017/007

So, the DOE needs to now take responsibility for the actions that undeniably will cause long-term problems and have caused long-term problems as a result of these things.

TSP-0002/002

We have already seen that the DOE cannot be trusted to clean up the Hanford Site in a timely manner and that known leaks are going unattended. If we can't trust DOE to store waste safely, there is no reason to think that it can be trusted to transport the waste safely.

TSP-0003/003

I want responsible ethics and behavior out of our government policies and especially in this case, in regards to

DOE

Hanford.

TSP-0007/004

I think it is clear that the DOE at Hanford has done an inadequate, an incompetent job in doing the job that they were charged to do. For all I know, the hundreds of millions of dollars have not been enough. All I know is they are not doing what they said they were going to do. The credibility of the DOE at Hanford has to be really, really low.

TSP-0013/001

And to me, as a citizen, reading the newspaper, you have no trust with me. There has been no credibility in what the DOE has said. It's changing its mind all the time. It's revising its figures all the time. It's renegeing on promises all the time. There has been no good faith at all that you have shown, either in that history or in these sort of pathetic, impotent energy proposals.

It would seem to me as a citizen that the mission of the Department of Energy would be basically to keep the citizens safe from those -- from the tasks that the Department of Energy accomplishes, that their underlining mission would be to keep the citizens safe in the same way that all government -- mean, why do we need government? We only need government to protect citizens from outside danger basically. And in this role I find the DOE performing abysmally. In fact, really, more than anything else, it is a threat the American people have about energy.

TSP-0013/002

The process of this meeting bothers me a lot. I thought your presentation was very terse, brief, evasive, with very little data really given to people, very little background information given to people, very little facts given to people. Allowing only one question of people who spontaneously ask questions. I don't know why there was that control. Getting ready to grasp the microphone, to rush people in the process. All this really bothered me. I found the answers shallow, glib. Not knowing the half-life of substances when you should have come armed with facts and knowledge, and been able to elucidate people, rather than the opposite.

Response

DOE is responsible for the cleanup of dozens of sites around the country, and DOE takes very seriously its responsibility to protect and preserve the environment. DOE's approach is to consolidate and dispose of radioactive waste from all its cleanup efforts in the safest and most cost-effective manner possible. Hanford and other sites would be available for the disposal of low-level waste and mixed low-level waste; WIPP is used for the disposal of TRU waste; Yucca Mountain is expected to be used for the disposal of high-level waste and spent nuclear fuel.

DOE is committed to cleaning up the Hanford Site in accordance with the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) and applicable environmental requirements under federal and state laws and regulations. A lot in the way of cleanup has happened at Hanford over the last decade. Portions of the site have already been cleaned up, removed from the National Priority List (NPL), and released for other uses (e.g., the 1100 Operable Unit). As part of the river corridor cleanup, DOE is remediating contaminated soil sites, decommissioning the plutonium production reactors and associated facilities, removing production reactor fuel from the K Basins to interim storage in the 200 Area, and treating groundwater contaminated by past operations.

Radioactive waste management practices at Hanford are regulated by the DOE according to the requirements of the AEA and the DOE system of implementing directives. Certain wastes and waste management practices at Hanford are also regulated by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington State Department of Ecology. Volume I Section 6 identifies the major statutes, permits, compliance agreements, and regulatory requirements followed in conducting operations at Hanford Site. Statutes include AEA, CERCLA, RCRA and the State of Washington Hazardous Waste Management Act. Volume I Section 6.3 discusses the TPA. Volume I Section 6.4 discussed the Dangerous Waste Management permit. Volume I Section 6.19 provides a summary of existing and potential permits (including state approved permits where

DOE

state decision-making will be necessary) required to construct and operate treatment, storage, and disposal facilities related to the HSW EIS alternatives. Public involvement, as part of NEPA reviews, permit applications, and other regulatory programs, is an essential component of DOE's ongoing cleanup initiatives and is considered in DOE's decision-making processes.